



Capital Planning Committee

Capital Plan for FY2022 (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022)
5-Year Plan for FY2022 – FY2026

Date: Thursday, November 19, 2020
Time: 5:00pm-7:00pm
Location: Zoom Meeting

Minutes

Attendance: Joseph Barr,
Ida Cody,
Kate Leary,
Kate Loosian,
Phyllis Marshall,
Michael Mason,
Chris Moore,
Angela Olszewski,
Sandy Pooler,
Jon Wallach,
Julie Wayman, Management Analyst
Timur Kaya Yontar,
Joe Connelly, Recreation Director.

Not in attendance: None.

Meeting Opened: Mr. Yontar called the meeting to order at 5:07pm. The minutes of the meeting of November 5, 2020 were reviewed and unanimously approved (moved by Ms. Loosian, seconded by Mr. Moore).

Review of Upcoming Meetings: Mr. Yontar briefly reviewed the upcoming schedule of meetings including the planned attendance by Energy Manager Ken Pruitt at the December 3 meeting to discuss the Net Zero Plan and the upcoming reviews of the full capital plan and budget.

Discussion with the Recreation Director Joe Connelly: Mr. Yontar and the members of the Public Works and Recreation Subcommittee introduced Mr. Connelly, who is the Recreation Director, to discuss increases in the capital costs of recreation capital projects,

particularly playgrounds. Mr. Connelly participated in an interactive discussion with the Committee, which included a number of key points:

- One key driver in the cost of playgrounds is changes in surface of the playground surface, which has moved from sand->mulch->rubber->poured-in-place rubber, with each new material being more expensive than the previous one. Poured-in-place rubber costs ten times as much as mulch, and as an example, the recently renovated Lussiano Field has \$80,000 in poured-in-place rubber. They are exploring options for installing rubber in high use areas with mulch in other areas. The work at the Reservation is an example where mulch is being used to fit in better with the surrounding environment, but rubber is still needed for accessibility.
- Another cost driver is the complexity of the equipment that is installed and the associated user expectations.
- He is working on trying to standardize the type of equipment that is used and also making sure that it's not expensive to ship or difficult/expensive to maintain (since many playground equipment manufacturers are located outside the US). Standardizing the playground equipment doesn't mean that there can't be customization of the structure, but is more about using the same manufacturer so that replacement parts are common.
- It is important to be aware of changes in safety standards (example of the large area around a swing set that needs to have rubber or mulch for safety reasons).
- For School projects, there is a tendency for more parent involvement, which can lead to increases in cost.

Based on the information from Mr. Connelly, the Committee had a number of comments and questions:

- Mr. Yontar pointed out that if there is no standard/expected budget going into a playground project, it's easier for the cost to expand. Mr. Connelly noted that a typical estimate for a playground renovation is \$500,000, not including any additional fencing, paths, or other related improvements that might be required.
- Mr. Connelly said that the Recreation Department is working with the Parks and Recreation Commission on improving design and cost estimates for playgrounds and fields, which will then feed into future capital requests. They have requested funding for a yearly playground audit, which would cover both the assessment and some level of repairs based on the audit.
- Mr. Yontar asked how long we should expect a well-maintained playground to last. Mr. Connelly said that they should last at least 15-20 years, other than very heavily used components. So if we are renovating playgrounds on that cycle, we should be able to keep up with this work.
- Ms. Leary asked what they envision as the design and outreach process for these projects. Mr. Connelly said that they generally start from a blank sheet of paper and listen to community feedback, and then the landscape architect will design the playground based on that. He noted the importance of having cost estimates for the options that are developed, so that they don't end up showing the public something that isn't really affordable.
- Ms. Leary also inquired about the difficulty of maintaining mulch surfacing to the required height below the equipment. Mr. Connelly said that this is a constant

challenge that is very difficult for the Department of Public Works to keep up with, given resource constraints.

Mr. Connelly ended the discussion by noting that the report from Stantec on playground needs should be available by the middle of December. The Committee members thanked him for the informative and helpful information that he provided.

Community Preservation Act Committee (CPAC) Coordination: Ms. Olszewski (who is the Committee's representative to CPAC) summarized the one page document that was sent around to the Committee, including the schedule of grant application submittals and project reviews. CPAC is expecting to have a budget of \$2.4M based on additional funding from the state and is expecting to allocate \$1M to recreation projects. CPAC has received the following applications for recreation projects:

- Robbins Farm Slides: \$100,000
- Hurd Field: \$857,000
- Spy Pond Playground: \$400,000

The expectation at this point is that the Robbins Farm Slides and Hurd Field will receive funding but not the Spy Pond Playground. In addition, they don't expect to fund Brackett Playground project because it came from Parent Teacher Organization, not the Arlington Public Schools. Mr. Pooler also clarified that in general, school playgrounds are not eligible for CPA funding because they are not under the direct jurisdiction of the Town, but rather under APS jurisdiction. Ms. Leary noted that CPA can fund design at school facilities, but not construction.

Ms. Leary asked whether CPAC can partially fund a project and Mr. Pooler responded that they can, with the general fund (or another funding source) supplementing CPA funding. and vice versa. Ms. Wayman said that CPAC will meet in January to review applications and should know final funding amounts by February.

Administration Subcommittee-Libraries: Ms. Olszewski started the discussion with Minuteman Library Network-related requests, which are basically the same as past years, but raise the overall question about whether fees and cloud hosting are capital expenses. Mr. Yontar then suggested bringing forward the discussion about capital vs. operating for software licenses. Mr. Pooler then provided an overview of the issue and current status:

- Over time, the transition has occurred from one-time software purchases to ongoing software licenses/subscriptions.
- The total cost of all those licenses is ~\$200,000/year.
- This large a cost cannot easily be moved into the operating budget, particularly for FY22 given the constraints on revenue and state aid and the resulting impacts on the Town and APS operating budgets.
- The Committee could think about doing this for smaller things, but larger changes would take more time to occur.
- Based on this, Mr. Pooler recommended keeping the library licensing costs in capital for FY22.

Following this overview, Committee members raised a number of issues:

- Ms. Wayman noted that there aren't a lot of small software costs, so it's difficult to shift small amounts incrementally.
- Mr. Barr asked whether we could establish a policy that new licenses go into the operating budget. Mr. Pooler indicated that he doesn't have a strong opinion, and views this more as a cash flow issue than a higher level discussion about budget philosophy.
- Mr. Moore asked about the public safety related items proposed for this year, which are a mixture of cell phones and software and licenses. Ms. Cody said that on their own, a lot of these items are not capital, but if you add it all together, it might be considered to qualify. Overall, it's less problematic, since this is paid with tax levy not borrowing. However, Mr. Yontar noted that this doesn't really match up with our definition of capital, and Ms. Cody agreed, while Mr. Moore said that this is really a policy decision about how we want to pay for these items.

Following additional discussion, the Committee came to the overall decision that there would not be a major shift in these areas, since the upcoming fiscal year is probably not the best time to make this change given the fiscal uncertainty, and that it would definitely take several years to make this change overall.

Ms. Loosian then discussed the two large building-related requests, starting with the potential replacement of the Fox Library:

- To move this project forward, there has been some discussion of creating a Fox Library Building Committee that would become responsible for this project.
- Based on the Subcommittee discussion, the cost estimate has been increased to show escalation, which is shown in the Subcommittee form.
- The Library Director is looking at the possibility of applying for a grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) for this project, but it is not clear when that funding will be available or when the next grant round would open. Currently, the Town is not on any listing for potential MBLC funding.
- There was also some discussion of the concept of creating a mixed-use project at this location, and the additional opportunities and complexities that this might add to the project. Mr. Wallach noted that adding another use (such as affordable housing on the upper floors) might make the project ineligible for an MBLC.

Mr. Pooler noted that recent bids for portions of the Arlington High School (AHS) project have resulted in significant savings from the original estimate, and it is possible that the DPW project will also come in below the estimate based on current market conditions. This could create some flexibility in the capital program to fund a project such as the Fox Library. As a side note, he also indicated that these cost savings could potentially also allow for some elements eliminated from the AHS project through the Value Engineering process to be added back to the project.

The Committee then discussed the Robbins Library renovation and expansion project:

- The Subcommittee has also added cost escalation to this project, as reflected in the Subcommittee form. They have also added costs associated with swing space

during renovation. Based on these changes, Mr. Pooler asked some clarifying questions about when the Owners' Project Manager (OPM) funds should be allocated and spent.

- Ms. Leary asked whether there is any fundraising associated with this project, and Ms. Cody responded that they are looking for potential grant opportunities.
- Mr. Moore noted that the Committee needs to figure out how to push back on some of these larger cost building projects, since they are not likely to all be affordable in the near term.
- Ms. Loosian asked why the Fox project is shown advancing at a later date than the Robbins project, and Mr. Barr noted that this is partly because there have in the past been questions about the long-term future of the Fox Library and whether the Town needed/could afford more than one library building. Ms. Marshall also noted that there are a lot of other boards/commissions and departments that need to weigh in on the Fox project before it can move forward.

Mr. Yontar suggested that we take a vote on both projects, and then work out the timing and availability of funds during the overall reconciliation of the plan. Before voting on the library requests, the Subcommittee noted that the sweeps are due to savings realized with the help of the Facilities Department.

Ms. Loosian made a motion to approve the Libraries requests. Mr. Moore then raised a point of order about clarifying the final amount for the Robbins Library project based on the discussion about OMP funds, which was clarified as being \$1.15M in 2023 and \$13M in 2025. Mr. Moore then seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Outstanding Capital Requests: The Committee then discussed a number of outstanding requests which had not been finalized:

- The request for \$160,000 for the repairs to the roof of the Ed Burns Arena was discussed. Mr. Barr indicated that Recreation is still evaluating the need for this work, but wanted to keep the funds in the plan until they are sure as to what is needed. Mr. Barr made a motion to approve this request, which was seconded by Mr. Moore and approved unanimously
- The Inspectional Services Department (ISD) is requesting funding to replace the vehicle used by the plumbing inspector. Originally, they were looking to purchase an electric Smart car, but since those are no longer sold in the US, they are now looking at a Chevrolet Bolt, which is also electric. A question was raised about whether a charging station is needed at ISD's office, but Mr. Pooler indicated that they could charge occasionally at an existing charging station, given the range of the vehicle and the limited miles that are driven. Ms. Loosian made a motion to approve this request, which was seconded by Mr. Moore and unanimously approved.
- Following discussions with the Police Department, they are also proposing to replace the request for an electric Smart car with one for a Chevrolet Bolt. Mr. Pooler asked whether there was any discussion of applying for grant funds for this vehicle and Mr. Yontar said that this hadn't come up during the discussions. Mr.

Moore made a motion to approve this request, which was seconded by Ms. Loosian and unanimously approved.

- Two requests from the Fire Department were discussed, starting with the request to replace the marble at the Highland Avenue Fire Station. In response to the questions about the protective bollards, the Fire Chief indicated that the existing bollards were not located in the right place to protect the marble, so they will be moved as part of the replacement of the marble, without any cost increase. For the Records and Reporting project, the Subcommittee moved the data and wifi costs out of the capital budget, so they will need to be funded from the operating budget. Mr. Pooler said that he would need to determine if there is space in the operating budget to accommodate this change, and will get back to the Committee. Mr. Moore made a motion to approve these requests, which was seconded by Mr. Barr and unanimously approved.
- Three other outstanding items were discussed as part of a single vote. From the Planning and Community Development Department requests, the Committee discussed approving the requests for Bluebikes funding as a starting point, subject to further discussion during the overall reconciliation process. From the Redevelopment Board requests, the increase in the cost the Whittemore Park project was confirmed as being needed to address the water infiltration issues that have developed. From the Information Technology Department budget, the Committee referred back to the earlier discussion about capital eligibility of software licenses and discussed keeping all of the requested software licenses in the capital budget. Mr. Pooler made a motion to approve all of these items, which was seconded by Ms. Loosian. The motion was approved by a vote of 11 in favor and 1 against, with Ms. Marshall voting no and the remaining Committee members voting yes.

New Business: There were no new business items.

Meeting Adjournment: The meeting adjourned unanimously at 7:18pm (moved by Mr. Barr, seconded by Mr. Moore).